

Sociolinguistic Domain Analysis, Linguistic Practices and Performance in Religious Worship

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understood in and across a range of faith settings? How are performance and faith conceptualised through different academic disciplines? This collection of essays addresses these questions, and others, as it explores the complex relationship present in the nexus between faith and performance. A naturally inter-disciplinary work this book contains contributions from a diverse group of scholars representing a wide range of methodologies and theoretical perspectives. As sociolinguists explore how language performance shapes and is shaped by faith, social anthropologists and psychologists examine how identity performance is crucial in negotiating faith identities, and scholars from theatre and performance studies engage with ways material settings are performatively transfigured to create sacred spaces (to mention but a few approaches covered in this book), the reader is taken on a journey of the world's faiths and their diverse practices.

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Aspects of Performance
in Faith Settings

Andrey Rosowsky

Aspects of Performance in Faith Settings

Heavenly Acts

Edited by Andrey Rosowsky



CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIOLINGUISTIC DOMAIN ANALYSIS, LINGUISTIC PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

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Overview

- **Introduction**
- **Domain analysis and speech community**
- **The religious and sociolinguistic context**
- **Our case study**
- **The church as a social/educative space**
- **Conclusion**

Introduction (1/3)

- **Interrogation of the practice of domain assignment and analysis in Sociolinguistics**
- **SLR project (Omoniyi and Fishman 2006; Omoniyi 2010)**
- **We question the extent to which concepts in sociology of language can be adopted wholesale and employed in SLR in order to develop a strong theoretical apparatus for the emergent subdiscipline**
- **In multilingual contexts, diversity is expected and permitted, even for a restricted and controlled domain such as religion**
- **Languages or varieties which may start out on the margins may find their way into significant aspects of certain religious rituals**

Introduction (2/3)

- **Omoniyi & Fishman (2006)**
 - A theoretical paradigm about the interconnectedness of language and religion
 - The need for integrated studies at both macro and micro levels
- **Studies which demonstrate the inseparability of language and religion**
 - Mooney 2010; Darqueness & Vandenbussche 2011; Mukherjee 2013; Jousmaki 2015
- **Exploration of the language practices and associated performances of the worship domain through the case study of a church in Accra – Redeemer Church of Paradise (RCP)**

Introduction (3/3)

- **The association of the worship domain with one religious language may be misleading and simplistic**
- **Some church activities belong traditionally to non-worship domains**
- **When this happens, the church is reconstituted, and takes on features of another domain (topic, language use, props, actors)**
- **Specific case – guest speaker on HIV/AIDS**
- **Template is worship domain – anchorage is derived from religious textual sources**
- **A basis for multi-domain analysis in SLR, rather than the existing theoretical strait-jacket**

Domain analysis and speech community (1/7)

- **DA – a framework for delineating language use in the speech community**
- **Originally suggested by Schmidt-Rohr (1930s)**
- **Popularized by Fishman (1972)**
- **Domains are theoretical constructs which motivate specific language choices in multilingual settings**
- **They are social spaces of activities associated with specific language practices (Fishman 1972; Parasher 1980; Haberland 2005)**
- **In multilingual contexts, domains may be deciphered by the assignment of different languages to occurring transactions (Amfo & Omoniyi 2019)**

Domain analysis and speech community (2/7)

- **This may be backed by formal policy statements or they emerge from conventional practice**
- **The linguistic landscape of a domain may comprise multiple languages with one being the dominant language of transaction while other(s) are assigned lesser roles**
- **There may be a dominant officially recognized LoC, while other languages operate on the margins to varying extents.**

Amfo & Omoniyi 2019; Mooney 2006

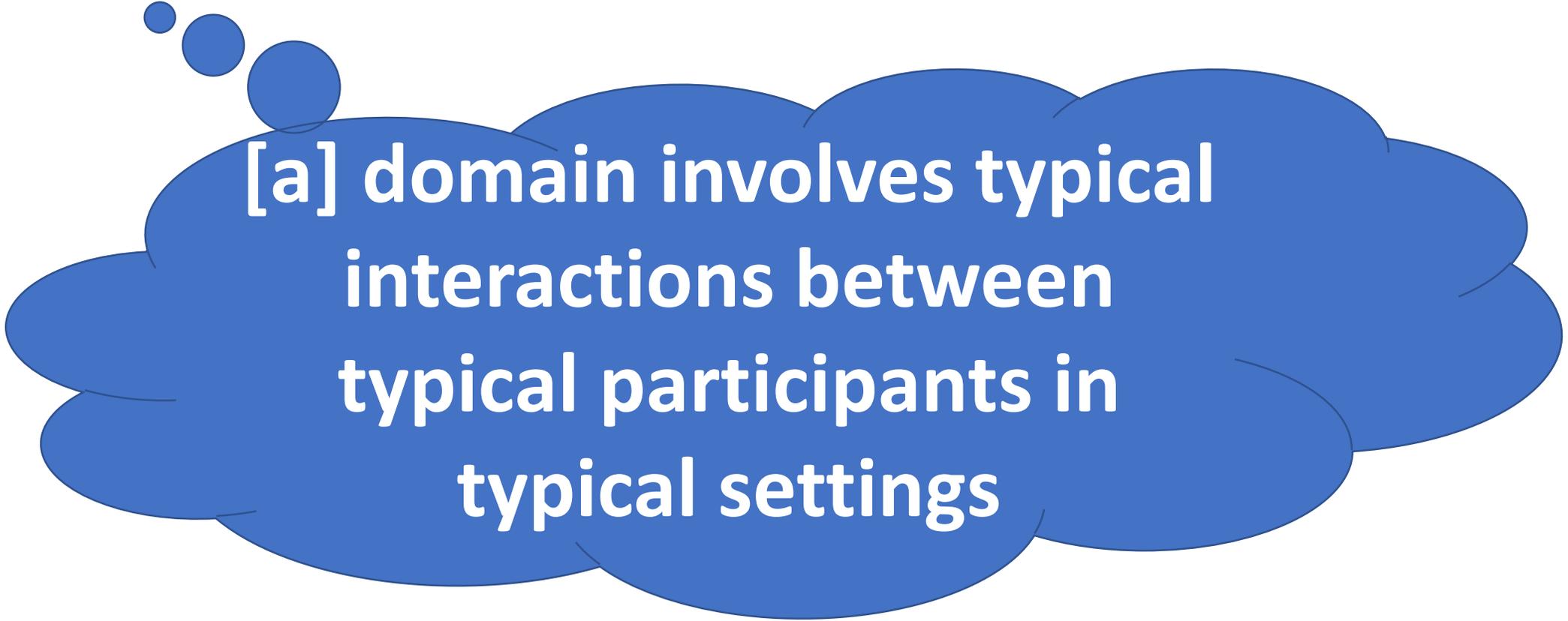
Domain analysis and speech community (3/7)

- **Domains are constructed based on each multilingual group**
- **Speech community comprises several domains, which are differentiated by configurations of persons, place and topic**
- **Examples of domains**
 - **Family;**
 - **Religion;**
 - **Education;**
 - **Workplace;**
 - **Playground/recreation;**
 - **Friendship.**

(Hymes 1964; Fishman 1972; Parasher 1980)

Domain analysis and speech community (4/7)

- Holmes 2013: 22



[a] domain involves typical interactions between typical participants in typical settings

Domain analysis and speech community (5/7)

Domain	Addressee	Setting	Topic
Family	Parent	Home	Planning a family party
Friendship	Friend	Beach	How to play beach tennis
Religion	Priest	Church	Choosing the Sunday liturgy
Education	Teacher	School	Solving a maths problem
Employment	Employer	Workplace	Applying for a promotion

Domain analysis and speech community (6/7)

- **Rampton 2010: 274**

Rather than our actions being seen as a mere reflection of our belonging to “big communities” that pre-exist us, there is now more emphasis on the part that here-and-now social action plays in the production of “small” but new communities, and rather than just concentrating on behavior at the core, there is a burst of interest in interaction with “strangers” inside, outside and at the boundaries.

Domain analysis and speech community (7/7)

- **Expectations: different domains would be characterized by different languages**
- **As suggested by Rampton, the situation is often more complex than it seems**
 - **Smaller communities within big communities**
 - **Small but new communities**
- **Nutakor & Amfo (2018):**
 - **Older children with more languages used different languages with different participants within the domain of the family**
 - **Languages of wider communication (English, Akan, Hausa) were increasingly used in the home among different participants**

The religious and sociolinguistic context (1/3)

- **Centre of gravity of Christianity is shifting from the north to the south (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, Shoesmith 2008)**
 - **Ghana is a highly religious country, with a dominant Christian population**
 - **71.2% Christian; 17.6% Muslim; 5.2% Traditionalists; 5.3 no religion (GSS 2012)**
 - **Public display of religious faiths**
 - **Christian services at the end of the year; significant anniversaries etc**
 - **National events**
- “it is impossible to begin or start meetings of any kind without Christian prayer” – Gifford (2004: 21)**

The religious and sociolinguistic context (2/3)

Lord of Glory Kebabs

Holy Ghost Cosmetics

Glory be to God Hostel

The religious and sociolinguistic context (3/3)

- **81 languages (Simon and Fennig 2018)**
- **Principal languages: Akan and English**
- **Akan: most widely spoken indigenous language; 47.5% native; two-thirds use it as a lingua franca**
- **Dominant in the capital Accra – loss of Ga and dominance of Akan and English**

The case study (1/3)

- **Data extracted from a corpus of ongoing study on language practices in religious domains**
- **Location – RCP**
- **Participant observation (September to December 2015)**
- **RCP – medium-sized interdenominational church in Accra**
- **Stand-alone church (AIC), cf. Gifford 2004, Asamoah-Gyadu 2005 etc**
- **It's community, rather than individual driven**
- **Interdenominational – it incorporates liturgical features typical of mainline churches (bible reading, hymns), charismatic churches (praise and worship), Pentecostal (bible study)**

The case study (2/3)

- **Performance and Christian worship**
 - **Reconceptualization of the family**
- **No documented language policy – flexible multilingualism**
- **Dominant languages: English and Akan; others – Ga and Ewe**
- **Choice is for pragmatic purposes (English and Akan)**
- **Ga and Ewe are used marginally and may be seen as symbolically relevant**
- **Different segments are led by different performers**
- **Different language practices, with English dominating**

The case study (3/3)

- **Praise & Worship – English and Akan (also Ewe and Ga)**
- **Hymns – mostly in English (occasionally Akan)**
- **Bible reading/study – English, Akan, Ga and Ewe**
- **Sermon - bilingual**
- **Song ministration by Choir – All 4 languages, occasionally a foreign language (Zulu or a Nigerian language, usually mixed with English)**
 - **This is indicative of mobility of cultural products; mobility of languages, made accessible through the internet, television and radio**
 - **The internet allows a readily accessible global audience; foreign songs are enthusiastically received by the congregants, even with minimal understanding**

The church as a social/educative space (1/5)

- **Late October 2015**
- **The peculiarity of the service redefined the church as a social/educative space**
- **Thus the religious domain and space were reconstituted**
- **Usual segments – prayer, P&W, bible reading, etc**
- **Sermon segment was used to educate the congregants about HIV/AIDS**
- **Guest medical officer replaced the reverend minister**

The church as a social/educative space (2/5)

- **Establishing the context/Seeking acceptance**
- **Contextualizing the secular scientific with the sacred (biblical scriptures)**
 - **3 John 2, Hosea 4: 6a**
- **Good health is a biblical desire and to achieve that, one requires to be knowledgeable on health issues**
- **Decontextualization and recontextualization (Bauman & Briggs 1990, Fairclough 2003)**
 - **The messages are removed from their originally intended religious context and made to fit the health talk context**

The church as a social/educative space (3/5)

- **The medical officer spoke mostly in English**
 - Explained some scientific terms in Akan and offered elaborations and illustrations in Akan
- **She was aided by a PowerPoint presentation**
- **Interactive, like a classroom session – tested their knowledge and sustained their interest**
- **Q&A at the end of the talk, replacing the post-sermon prayer session**

The church as a social/educative space (4/5)

- **A religious domain can be reconstituted into a social/education domain**
- **Certain topics are anticipated within certain domains and settings (Holmes 2013, Fishman 1972)**
- **This notwithstanding, correlations between domains, settings, topics and even language variety (or choice) cannot be static and pre-determined**
- **The church leadership may have been responding to certain anticipated needs by turning one Sunday service into a health education service**

The church as a social/educative space (5/5)

- **The quest for a holistic approach to the spiritual and physical needs of the congregants is not totally alien in RCP**
- **Props for the service includes brochures (bulletins)**
 - **Liturgy, hymns, announcements, reflection for the week (250 words), health tit bits (70 words)**
- **For RCP members, health issues within their linguistic landscape is not altogether new**
- **In October 2015, the intrusion of non-religious topics as a feature of Sunday services was elevated to the point of replacing the highest point of the service – the sermon**

Conclusion – Domain and Speech Community

- **Language and performance practices of a medium-sized Christian church in Accra, Ghana**
- **Context – DT and Speech Community in multilingual settings**
- **No documented or well-articulated language policy**
- **RCP practises a form of liberal, yet controlled, multilingualism**
- **Four languages are regularly used in that domain**
 - **English and Akan are mainstreamed**
 - **Ewe and Ga are used marginally**



Conclusion – Domain and Speech Community

- The expectation of the use of one religious language (or variety) within the religious domain cannot be sustained, especially in multilingual communities
- In multilingual contexts, such diversity is to be expected and accommodated even in seemingly formal context like religious ones
- Reconstitution of the religious space into a social or an educative space when such a need arises
- Attempts to make the secular sacred by anchoring what would otherwise be a purely secular scientific talk in biblical scriptures
- To make it more appealing to the audience who are in church to experience a spiritual encounter



Conclusion – Domain and Speech Community

- In agreement with Rampton's (2010) suggestion regarding the fluidity and constant construction of concepts like Domains and Speech Communities
- The “here-and-now” plays a critical role in the constant redefining and construction of new and smaller sub-communities embedded in larger ones
- Such finer details are only visible through meticulous micro-sociolinguistic studies

спасибо

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THANK YOU

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